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ABSTRACT

The curriculum on occupational safety and health, designed for a workplace literacy and basic skills program for clothing and textile workers union members, is outlined. Its objectives are to help workers understand the importance of following company health and safety rules and danger signs, identify and report workplace hazards, aid in resolution and prevention of health and safety problems, recognize symptoms of common workplace illnesses, understand their own and employers' rights and responsibilities under federal law, understand the union's role in resolving workplace health and safety problems, learn to report accidents or complaints, understand the importance of overall health and fitness, and learn about union clinic and social services programs. The guide includes: charts of common health and safety hazards, with causes, symptoms, and solutions; notes on maintaining overall health and fitness; and classroom activities and instructional materials drawn from a problem-based workplace English-as-a-Second-Language text. A vocabulary list is also included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 379 957

Curriculum Guide

Health & Safety in the Workplace

Worker Education Program

Chicago Teachers' Center

and

The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union

May, 1993

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This curriculum guide was developed for the Worker Education Program of the Chicago Teachers' Center of Northeastern Illinois University and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union by Program Coordinator Susan Keresztes-Nagy under the direction of the Program Director, Margaret Boyter-Escalona.

We wish to acknowledge the Amalgamated Clothing & Textile Workers Union for the information contained in its health and safety manual entitled "Partners In Prevention: Health & Safety Action Manual For Local Unions", which forms the core of our curriculum guide, as well as ESL for Action: Problem Posing at Work by Elsa Roberts Auerback and Nina Wallerstein, from which we have taken many ideas and activities for teaching health & safety.

Introduction

Workers' health and safety is vitally important, not only to workers and their families, but to their employers as well. Addressing health and safety issues in the workplace will help prevent job-related illnesses and injuries, which will, in turn, reduce absenteeism, decrease the number of Workers' Compensation law suits, and help lower the cost of employers' insurance. In addition, heightened worker awareness of health and safety issues in the workplace, combined with employers' commitment to these issues, will lead to better worker morale and productivity, as well as an overall improvement in product quality, benefiting both employees and e nployers.

The objectives of this Health & Safety Curriculum are the following:

1. Understand the importance of following company health & safety rules and danger/warning signs.

2. Identify and be able to report health & safety hazards in the workplace.

3. Problem-pose solutions to health & safety problems in the workplace and ways to prevent them.

4. Recognize symptoms of common workplace illnesses such as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome.

5. Understand employees' rights & responsibilities under the OSHA Act and Workers' Compensation laws.

6. Understand employers' rights & responsibilities under the OSHA Act and Workers' Compensation laws.

7. Understand the role of ACTWU in helping resolve health & safety problems in the workplace.

8. Learn procedures for reporting an accident and for filing a health & safety complaint or grievance.

9. Understand the importance of overall health and fitness.

10. Learn about ACTWU's health clinic and social service programs.

Hazard	Causes	Symptoms	Solutions
Noise	•machines •bad ventilation systems •bad acoustics	•ringing in ears •headaches •high blood pressure •sleep disruption •hearing loss (temporary or permanent) •deafness	•ear plugs •annual noise tests at plant •free hearing tests at clinic
Stress	•heat •noise •speed of production line •pressure to meet quotas •lack of exercise •personal problems •others?	•headaches •high blood pressure •ulcers •asthma •susceptibility to infections & allergies •heart disease •backaches	•physical excercise •relaxation techniques •balanced diet
Back Injuries	•manual material handling & lifting •working in awkward positions eg. twisting, leaning, bending •others?	•musculoskeletal damage (back injuries)	•wear a safety belt to lift heavy loads •bring object being lifted as close to the body as possible & minimize long reaches •bend knees & lift load straight up, slowly, avoiding fast, jerky movements. •try not to twist torso with feet in fixed position •avoid prolonged work in any one position and take rest breaks to avoid fatigue
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome	•repeated bending and twisting of the wrist - especially in forceful movements, which causes the carpal tunnel nerve in the wrist to be squeezed and pinched	•nighttime numbness or tingling of the first four fingers •pain	•see a doctor at the first sign of numbness or tingling in the fingers •if possible, stop doing the things that caused the condition •wear wrist splints at night (see a doctor first to be sure to get the right kind!) •take anti-inflammatory medications such as Ibuprofen or aspirin to reduce swelling and pain •rest can help ease the symptons •as a last resort, doctors might recommend steroids or surgery

Tendonitis	•repeated stressful movements of the hand, wrist, arm, elbow, or shoulder	•inflammation •pain •limited movement of the affected area •weakness of the affected area	•see a doctor at the first sign of symptoms •if possible, stop doing the things that caused the condition •take anti-inflammatory medication such as Ibuprofen or aspirin to reduce swelling and pain •rest to help ease the symptoms •as a last resort, doctors might recommend steroids or surgery
Chemicals	•inhalation of chemicals in the workplace in the form of vapors, gases, dust, fumes, and mists •physical contact with chemicals in the workplace (hands, eyes, mouth) •Toxic chemicals are found in: *paint *formaldehyde in permanent press fabric which is released during cutting and sewing *cotton dust in yarn and weaving operations *solvents in cleaning and manufacturing *dyes and colors in textile and leather processing	•**short term symptoms** include: *headaches *watery eyes *sore throat *dizziness *nausea *skin rashes *upset stomach *tiredness *shortness of breath •**long term symptoms** include: *cancer *lung, kidney, liver, and heart disease *birth defects, miscarriages, and sterility or infertility *brain and nervous system damage, incuding behavior changes	•read warning labels and signs in the workplace •wear protective equipment such as: -masks -gloves -goggles -aprons •ask the employer for Material Safety Data Sheets •talk to co-workers about the chemicals in the workplace and the problems they may be causing

machine accidents	•unexpected start-up of equipment •performing maintenance on operating equipment •lack of safety mechanisms on machines to protect workers from direct contact with moving machine parts such as belts, gears, shafts, pulleys, sprockets, drums, flywheels and others	ACCIDENTS! •burns •cuts •loss of fingers, limbs, and other body parts •blindess •others?	if possible, • developing a lockout program in which: 1) a lock is issued to every worker needing to repair, unjam, or work on a machine 2) before shutting off a machine, workers are required to make sure no one is operating it, so that sudden loss of power doesn't cause an accident 3) electical circuits are checked, and stored energy in electrical capacitators is safely discharged to ensure that an electrical failure doesn't energize the machinery 4) all other energy sources which could activate machinery are locked out •install safety mechanisms on machines at: 1) the area of the machine where work is being performed 2) points where a part of the body may be caught between two moving parts or between a moving and a stationary part of a machine or conveyor 3) where there are flying chips or sparks
Slippery Floors	•water, chemicals, oil, debris, threads, or scrap on floors	ACCIDENTS! (approximately 200,000 a year!)	if possible, • dry surfaces to work on, including rubber mats for added protection •non-slip surfaces on wet or oily areas •adequate floor drains •eliminating tripping hazards such as protruding nails, splinters, holes, or loose boards •wearing shoes with slip-resistent soles •sweeping floors regularly •wiping up spills immediately

Fires and Explosions	•defective electrical equipment •over-heated bearings & motors •combustible or flammable materials	•burns •asphyxiation •serious injuries •others?	if possible, •keep flammable liquids (fuel, solvents, paints, etc.) in covered containers when not in use and store in approved fire-resistant cabinets •do not use flammable liquids where there are open flames or other sources of ignition (welding, wires, electrical repairs) •do not smoke around flammable materials •remove waste materials frequently and keep in non-combustible bins outside the building •set up a preventive maintenance program for plant machinery •keep aisles clear at all times •make sure that exits are clearly marked and readily accessible at all times •make sure automatic sprinkler systems function properly at all times •have a fire protection program that includes regular inspections of fire extinguishers and emergency fire drills

Heat Stress	•excessive heat & humidity in the workplace	•decline of strength •fatigue •lower level of mental alertness, reaction time and coordination **Heat Exhaustion**: •fatigue, headache, nausea, giddiness •cool, clammy, moist skin •fainting •pale or flushed complexion *Treatment* •remove to cool area •administer fluids •rest **Heat Stroke**: •hot, dry skin •mental confusion •flushed appearance •fainting, convulsions •rise in body temperature *Treatment*: •immediate, rapid cooling •massage with cooled water •fan vigorously •treat at hospital	if possible, •air-conditioning •fans •insulation of sources of extreme heat such as boilers, furnaces or steam pipes •dehumidifiers •heat breaks in a cool rest area •water fountains readily available •adjustment periods of a week or more for new workers and those returning from vacation

Burns	•caustics and chemicals •steam and hot equipment	**First Degree Burns:** •redness & heat, itching,burning, pain (affects only outer layer of skin) **Second Degree Burns:** •redness and blisters •high degree of pain •easily infected (affects deeper layers of skin as well as outer layer) **Third Degree Burns:** •loss of skin and deeper tissue •white or charred, dry surface •not exceedingly painful at first because nerve endings are impaired or destroyed (very serious injuries)	•wear protective equipment, such as goggles, aprons & gloves when handling caustics or chemicals •add chemicals to water slowly, to prevent a rise in temperature which could cause boiling or splattering •keep away from open flames •observe NO SMOKING signs, especially around flammable chemicals
Power Tool Accidents	•improper use of power tools	ACCIDENTS! •cuts •burns •loss of fingers, limbs, & other body parts •hearing impairment •others?	•never carry tools by the cord or yank on the cord •keep cords and hoses away from heat, oil and sharp objects •secure work with a clamp or vise, keeping hands free to operate tools •maintain tools properly •do not wear loose clothing, ties or jewelry while operating machinery •keep a good footing and maintain good balance

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Company Solutions to Health & Safety Hazards in the Workplace

Through active participation in the Union, workers can implement changes and negotiate guarantees from employers to rid the workplace of health & safety hazards.

•NOISE

- •measure the noise level
- •maintain noise level below 90 dBA
- •for noise levels 85-90 dBA, OSHA requires companies to:
  - -have annual noise tests
  - -give free annual hearing tests
  - -allow union officers or safety committee members to watch tests
  - -give union & workers noise & hearing test results
  - -mandate the use of ear plugs

•STRESS

- •guarantee job security ("no lay-off" clause)
- •give clear job descriptions with promises of no increased work-load without union consent
- •upgrading & advancement programs
- •end sexual & racial discrimination
- •allow for more worker involvement in decisionmaking
- •have a strong grievance procedure with protection against harassment from supervisors
- •have comfortable rest areas
- •have no mandatory overtime
- •have no rotating shift schedules, or forward rotation only
- •reorganize work to provide more variety and creativity
- •provide Workers' compensation for job-related physical & emotional problems
- •have a retirement plan that provides good financial security

•***BACK INJURIES***	•supply mechanical lifting devices such as hoists, cranes, conveyors and carts and tools such as rollers, jacks and hooks to make lifting easier •design chairs & tables to eliminate frequent or extended bending or leaning •design containers to be as small as possible to make them lighter and provide handles to make lifting easier •allow enough work space to make reaching or leaning forward or sideways unnecessary •improve lighting & eliminate uneven floors to minimize slips, tripping and falls. •provide slip-resistant shoes & floor surfaces
•***CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME & other Repetitive Motion Injuries***	•redesign work stations & reorganize work to: -repeat movements less often -reduce the need for excessive force -avoid extreme movements of the joints -provide adjustable work table and chairs and arm & wrist supports -provide tools that eliminate bending/twisting of wrist -provide a variety of grip sizes -keep cutting tools sharp -increase rest periods -alternate jobs, where possible
•***CHEMICALS***	•substitute a less harmful material •enclose the work process where the chemical or solvent is being used •provide local exhaust ventilation •isolate the process •implement an adequate maintenance program •continuously monitor the area •develop a training and education program •provide personal protective equipment: masks, gloves, aprons, goggles (as a back-up for enginnering controls)

•MACHINE ACCIDENTS	•implement a lockout program which: locates & identifies all switches, valves and other energy sources that need to be locked out and trains all affected workers to recognize hazardous energy sources and the lockout procedures •install guards to prevent any contact between the worker and moving machine parts such as belts, gears, shafts, pulleys, sprockets, drums, flywheels, and other moving parts of equipment
•SLIPPERY FLOORS	•provide dry, non-slip surfaces to stand on •maintain adequate floor drainage •eliminate tripping hazards such as protruding nails, splinters, holes, or loose boards •mandate shoes with slip-resistent soles •keep floors dry, swept & clear of debris
FIRES & EXPLOSIONS	•keep flammable liquids in covered containers when not in use •remove waste materials frequently •set up a preventive maintenance program for plant machinery •keep aisles clear at all times •make sure exits are readily accessible and clearly marked •maintain all automatic sprinkler systems •have a fire protection program that includes fire extinguishers and emergency fire drills
HEAT STRESS	•provide: -air-conditioning or fans -dehumidifiers -insulation for boilers, furnaces or steam pipes •allow adjustment periods of a week or more for new workers and those returning from vacation •provide a cool rest area for breaks from the heat •provide easily accessible water fountains

BURNS	•provide personal protective equipment such as goggles, aprons, or gloves •insulate or guard steam pipes and other hot equipment •inspect electrical equipment regularly for frayed wiring
POWER TOOL ACCIDENTS	•provide clamps or vises to secure work so hands can be kept free to operate tools •maintain tools •keep cords and hoses from heat, oil or sharp objects

Overall Health & Fitness

To stay healthy:

•Maintain a balanced diet

•Exercise regularly

•Get medical checkups regularly, including tests for early signs of serious disease, such as:

- -Pap smears (cervical cancer)
- -High blood pressure ("hypertension")
- -Mammography (breast cancer)
- -Headaches (stress, cancer, others)

•Pay attention to early signs of injury or illness

•Don't smoke

•Limit consumption of alcohol

•If you have a drug or alcohol problem, get help through the Union

Other Possible Topics:

•Pregnancy and Work

•AIDS

The following pages of health & safety information and activities are from ESL for Action: Problem Posing at Work by Elsa Roberts Auerbach and Nina Wallerstein, Addison-Wesley, 1987.

ATTITUDES ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

1.

	Your opinion AGREE/DISAGREE		Group opinion AGREE/DISAGREE	
1. Most accidents happen at work because workers are careless.	___	___	___	___
2. If a worker tries to improve safety at work, he/she may get in trouble.	___	___	___	___
3. Management knows that "safety pays" and will take care of safety problems.	___	___	___	___
4. There are always safety problems at a job; you just have to accept them.	___	___	___	___
5. If you worry about safety you will go crazy; let the union or the employer worry about it.	___	___	___	___

Survey

2. Answer these questions about your workplace:

1. Do you have any safety problems because of the following:

___ housekeeping/clutter
___ electricity
___ fire
___ lifting
___ eye injuries
___ trips and falls
___ machinery
___ poor safety equipment
___ stairs, floors, exits
___ ladders
___ leaks, spills
___ other _____

2. Are there possible health hazards from the following:

___ toxic chemicals
___ dust
___ noise
___ infectious disease
___ radiation
___ temperature
___ vibration
___ poor lighting
___ other _____

3. Have you or others had any of the following symptoms:

___ nausea, dizziness, or headaches
___ skin problems (rashes)
___ breathing problems (nose, throat problems)
___ frequent colds or unusual coughing
___ ringing ears, loss of hearing
___ aches and pains in chest, side, back
___ infections
___ childbirth problems or miscarriages
___ health problems that go away when you leave work
___ eye problems
___ problems worse than last year

3. Survey

1. Do you often leave work with a headache or feeling sick?
2. Do you breathe chemicals or fumes all day?
3. Is there a bad smell at your workplace?
4. Is there so much noise that you need to shout to the person next to you?
5. Have there been many accidents on your machine or in your area?
6. Do lots of people at your job have the same health problem (headaches, skin problems, stomach problems, dizziness)?
7. Do people feel better on the weekends and get sick again on Monday?
8. Are people who have been on the job for many years very unhealthy?
9. Has your doctor ever asked you if you feel sick at work?

4. Understanding what hazards are

Safety hazards are conditions that cause immediate harm, that is, accidents and injury (broken bones, cuts, loss of eyesight).

Health hazards are conditions that cause disease or illness (hearing loss, heart disease, cancer). They may come on slowly and be harder to distinguish.

5. Health & Safety Rules: Why?

1. Rule: Don't wear loose clothes around machines.
   Reason: They *might* get caught in a machine.
2. Rule: Wear strong shoes. Don't wear sandals.
   Reason: You *could* hurt your feet. A box could fall on your toes.
3. Rule: Tie back long hair; don't wear hair loose near machines.
4. Rule: Wear hair nets when working with food.
5. Rule: Don't wear jewelry (earrings, necklaces, etc.) around machinery.
6. Rule: Wear work gloves around chemicals.
7. Rule: Wear safety glasses or goggles.
8. Rule: Wear ear plugs or earmuffs in noisy areas.
9. Rule: Wear a mask or respirator around dust or fumes.
10. Rule: Wear a hard hat in areas where things may fall.
11. Rule: Keep your work area clean and neat. Don't leave anything on the floor.
12. Rule: Put tools and equipment away.
13. Rule: Clean up spills and leaks.
14. Rule: Bend your knees when you lift something heavy.
15. Rule: Know where exits and fire extinguishers are.
16. Rule: Don't leave your machine running while you're away.
17. Rule: Use the safety catch on your machine.
18. Rule: Obey safety signs. (Ask if you don't understand them.)
19. Rule: Report safety problems to your supervisor.
20. Rule: (Add your own.) _____

#5: Getting help and information

Divide into groups: each group should read one section and report about it to the class.

Sometimes you may need more information to solve a health or safety problem. For example, what are noise level standards? What chemicals are in the substances we use? Are they dangerous? You can get help and information in many places:

1. YOUR EMPLOYER: According to law, you have the *right to know* certain kinds of information about substances. Employers must give workers this information *if they have it*. Your employer must give you:

   —your medical records.
   —your exposure records (how much contact you've had with chemicals, radiation, noise, heat, etc.).
   —information the employer already has about substances (safe levels of use, protections, effects of exposure).

2. UNION REPRESENTATIVES: If you're in a union, it can help you find out about substances and standards. It can:

   —bring in its own experts to inspect the workplace.
   —file grievances about health and safety problems.
   —find out more information than individual workers can (according to the National Labor Relations Act).

   If your local union is not able to help, you can call the Health and Safety Department of your international union.

3. OSHA OR OTHER AGENCIES: OSHA may send an inspector to your workplace to check on conditions. You may also be able to get help from NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health), from universities, and from COSH groups (state health and safety committees). *Note:* It often takes a long time to get results from these agencies.

4. WORKERS IN THE SUPPLY DEPARTMENT: Sometimes the names of chemicals or other substances are in or on the boxes that they come in. Shipping or supply workers may save these for you.

Workers' compensation

Divide into groups: each group should read one question and report it to the others.

1. What are Workers' Compensation laws? Workers' Compensation laws in each state say that workers can get benefits for disabilities caused by work-related injuries or illnesses. A *disability* is a medical problem which stops you from doing your regular job. You cannot lose your job if you have a *temporary disability*.

2. What injuries and illnesses are covered? You can collect Workers' Compensation benefits (medical care and pay for lost wages):

—if you get hurt at work (and lose pay).
—if you get a disease (like lead poisoning or cancer) from work.
—if you have a medical problem which becomes disabling because of an injury at work.
—if you get hurt on company grounds (for example, the parking lot) on the way to or from work.

3. How do you collect Workers' Compensation? In order to collect, you should:

—Report your accident to your supervisor immediately. If you don't report it within three months, you may lose the right to collect.
—Report a job-related illness to your employer as soon as you know about it. If you don't report it within 120 days of knowing about it, you may lose the right to collect.
—Report to first aid or the nurse's office immediately. Tell how the injury happened.
—Do not sign any papers with empty blanks. Do not sign any papers that you do not understand. Show them to your union representative or another worker before signing them.
—Keep a copy of all accident report forms or other papers about the accident/illness. Sometimes papers get lost. You may need to prove that you reported the accident on time.
—Keep the names and addresses of anyone who saw the accident (these people are *witnesses*).
—Keep all doctor's bills and statements about your injury.
—Make a *claim* for Workers' Compensation if you lose time from work. A claim is a request for payment. Often the claim form is the same as the *accident report form*. Your employer will send it in. *You should keep checking on it.*

COMPREHENSION

Do you think these workers can get Workers' Compensation? Write *yes* or *no* in the blank.

____ **1.** Mario lost a finger on the job.
____ **2.** Juan was in a car accident on the way to work. The accident was two miles from work.
____ **3.** Mary had a history of back problems. She picked up something heavy at work and injured her back.
____ **4.** A brick fell on Alda in the parking lot as she was leaving work.
____ **5.** Jose hurt his back at work. He didn't report it. Four months later, an x-ray showed damage to his spine.
____ **6.** Mel worked with heavy dust for several years. Ten years after he left the job, he got lung disease.
____ **7.** Juanita hurt her foot at work; her boss gave her a job sitting down. She didn't miss any work.

Employers' responsibilities

Keeping a workplace safe is not just the workers' job. In 1970, the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) was passed. This law says that employers must make sure that working conditions are safe. It says that *workers have the right to a safe and healthy workplace.*

Divide into small groups. Each group should read one question and report on it to the whole class.

1. **What hazards do employers have to protect workers from?**
   Employers must make their workplace safe and free of health hazards "as far as possible." They must protect workers from:

   —high noise levels that cause hearing or heart problems
   —substances that cause cancer
   —broken ladders, unguarded stairs, poor scaffolds
   —poor ventilation of dust and fumes that can cause lung problems
   —machinery that can cause injuries with no guards or emergency switches
   —poor wiring or electrical problems
   —poor equipment that can cause explosions, fires, crashes, or other accidents
   —fumes that can cause kidney, nerve, liver problems

2. **What do employers have to do to protect workers?**
   Employers must follow government safety and health standards. Over 5,000 standards say that employers must:

   —provide guards and emergency switches on machinery
   —keep safe levels of fumes, chemicals, dust, etc.
   —keep equipment in good repair
   —give workers safety clothes and equipment if necessary
   —label chemicals if they are dangerous
   —give workers regular medical check-ups if they work with dangerous materials (like lead or asbestos)
   —give any information they have about toxic substances to workers who ask for it

3. **What can OSHA do to make workplaces safer?**
   The Occupational Safety and Health Administration sets safety and health standards, inspects workplaces, orders employers to get rid of hazards, and fines employers who do not.

4. **What can workers do to make their workplaces safer?**
   When OSHA first started, it caused many changes in workplace safety. Recently, OSHA has been less active. This means workers need to do more for their own safety. They need to learn to recognize workplace hazards, learn how to get information about hazards, report health or safety problems, file complaints with OSHA if necessary, and learn their safety rights.

Filling out accident and illness forms

Discuss each part of this form in class. In pairs, fill out the form for one of the accidents on the previous page. Share your work with other students.

EMPLOYEE ACCIDENT REPORT

DATE: ___/___/___

NAME: _____ AGE: ____ SEX - F ☐ M ☐

DEPARTMENT: _____ JOB TITLE: _____

DEPT. SUPERVISOR: _____ IMMED. SUPERVISOR: _____

DETAILS OF ACCIDENT

DATE OF ACCIDENT: ___/___/___

TIME: _____

(1) EXACT LOCATION: _____

_____

(2) EMPLOYEE'S DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT:

_____

_____

_____

(3) WITNESS: _____
Signature

TIME LOST DUE TO ACCIDENT: _____

TREATMENT: _____

DEPARTMENT-HEAD COMMENTS - ACTION TAKEN:

_____

_____

_____
Signature

Filing a complaint with OSHA

Divide into groups; each group should report on one question.

1. What do OSHA regulations say? They say that you have the right to complain to management, OSHA, and the press about hazards on your job. You have the right to protest unsafe conditions even if you are not in a union.

Example: A pregnant employee at a sewing company told her supervisor that glue fumes were making her sick. He said she was a "complainer" and fired her. She filed a charge with OSHA and got her job back with back pay.

Example: A construction worker told a news reporter that he was working with asbestos dust. When the story came out in the paper, he was fired. He complained to OSHA and got back pay.

Note: The laws can't *stop* firings: they only help after you've been fired. It can take a long time to win.

2. Who can file a complaint? Any employee can file a complaint with OSHA. Unions, lawyers, family members of employees, and people who have left a job because of hazards can also file. Other people, like your doctor, can call OSHA to report a problem. OSHA will *not* tell your employer who filed if you don't want them to (see #4 and #5).

3. How do you file? OSHA has a form for complaints. It asks:
Where the hazard is located.
How many employees are exposed.
What injuries there have been.
What the employer knows about the hazard.
What the employer has done or not done.

4. What will OSHA do? If you sign the complaint and OSHA thinks there is a physical danger, an inspector will come to your workplace. If you do not sign the complaint, OSHA may just send the employer a letter about the complaint.

5. What will happen to you if you complain? You cannot be fired or punished for complaining about a health and safety problem. You can check the box "I do not want my name revealed to the employer" on the complaint form.

ONLY AS A LAST RESORT!

Pregnancy rights

Divide into groups. Each group should read one story and report about it. Explain the legality of the story to the class.

1. HIRING: Bonnie Perez was offered a sales job at a store. She told the interviewer she was three months pregnant. He said that the store does not hire people who need early leaves of absence. He told her to apply again after the baby was born.

This was illegal: An employer cannot refuse to hire or promote a pregnant woman who can do the main functions of the job.

2. HEALTH INSURANCE: Soraya Martinez got pregnant. Her co-workers told her she would not be covered by health insurance because she was single.

They were wrong: Health insurance paid for by the employer must cover pregnancy if the worker is married or single. Health plans must also pay for the pregnancy of wives of male employees.

3. JOB SECURITY: Mei-Lin Lei worked in a nursing home. Her boss wanted her to take an unpaid leave in her fifth month of pregnancy. He said the work was too heavy. She felt fine and wanted to keep working. He told her to leave.

Her supervisor was wrong: You have the right to work if you can do your job. You can only be asked to go on leave if your doctor says you cannot do your job.

4. UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS: When Maria Monteiro got pregnant, the fumes at her job began to bother her. Her doctor wrote a note saying the job was dangerous. Maria wanted to work in another part of the plant while she was pregnant. Her boss said there were no openings. She asked for a leave of absence. Her boss laid her off and told her to collect unemployment.

Her supervisor was right: Pregnant women can collect unemployment if:

a. They cannot do their regular job.
b. Their doctor states in writing it is dangerous for the mother or baby.
c. They ask for a safer job but can't get it.
d. They ask for a leave of absence.
e. They are able and willing to do other work.

They cannot collect unemployment if they are unable to work. This means they cannot collect during a leave at the end of a pregnancy to give birth.

5. DISABILITY PAY AND BENEFITS: When Elsa Auerbach was six months pregnant, she had to take a leave of absence. Her back was bad and her doctor said she could not work. She had to stay out four months but the company only paid her for six weeks. It paid workers with other disabilities (heart attacks, broken bones, etc.) for the full time they were out.

In 1979, this became illegal. The law says that pregnancy must be treated like any other disability.

This means: The employer does *not* have to pay you during maternity leaves. But if the employer pays other disabled workers for leaves, pregnant women must also be paid.

Vocabulary/Expressions for Health & Safety Unit

danger
fire
extinguish
exit
electrical wires
lifting
to trip
to hurt
to cut (off)
to burn
to bleed
to slip
to fall
headache
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
repetitive motion
stress
fumes
dust
injury
ventilation
lighting
flammable
poison
safety gear
safety belt
goggles
boots
glasses
hard hat
mask
gloves
first aid
high voltage
ear plugs

Watch out! / Watch it! /Look out!
Be careful!
Don't touch that!

Vocabulary/Expressions for Health & Safety Unit (cont.)

dosage
tablet
capsule
teaspoon
liquid
all body parts
ailments
flu
cold
fever
headache
stomachache
backache
absent
sick